



An Easter Symbol

A
Monologue of the Plantation
By Ruth McEnery Stuart.

Speaker—A Black Girl.
Time—Easter Morning.

"Seuse me knockin' at yo' do' so early, Miss Betty, 'but I's in trouble. Don't set up in bed. Jes' lay still an' let me talk to yer.

"I come to ax yer to please ma'am loan me a pair o' wings, mistus. No'm, I aint crazy. I mean what I say.

"You see, to-day's Easter Sunday, Miss Bettie, an' we're havin' a high time in our ch'ch. An' I's gwine sing de special Easter carol, wid Freckled Frances an' Lame Jane joinin' in de chorus an' our choir. Hit's one o' dese heah visble choirs sot up nex' to de pulpit in front o' de congeration.

"Of co'se me singin' de high solo, makes me de principlest figgur, so we 'ranged fur me to stan' in de middle, wid Frances an' Jake on each side, an' I got a bran new white tarlton frock, wid spangles on it an' a Easter lily wreath all ready. Of co'se, me bein' de fust singer, dat entitles me to wear de highest plumage, an' Frances, she knows dat, an' she 'lowed to me she was gwine wear dat white nainsook lawn you gi'n 'er, an' des a plain secondary hat, an' at de p'inted time we all three got to rise an' courtesy to de congeration, an' den bust into song. Lame Jake gwine wear dat white duck suit o' Marse John's an' a Easter lily in his buttonhole.

"Well, hit was all fixed dat-a-way, peaceable an' proper, but you know de trouble is Freckled Frances is jealous-hearted, an' she aint got no principle. I tell you, Miss Annie, when niggers gits white enough to freckle, you look out for 'em! Dey jes advanced fur enough along to show white ambition an' nigger principle! An' dat's a dange'ous mixture!

"An' Frances—? She aint got no mo' principle 'n a suck-ah dog! Ever sence we 'ranged dat Easter programme, she been studyin' up some owdacious way to outdo me to-day in de face of eve'ybody.

"But I'm jes one too many fur any yaller freckled nigger. I'm black—but dey's a heap o' trouble come out o' ink bottles befo' to-day!

"I done had my eye on Frances! An' fur de las' endurin' week, I taken notice ev'ry time we had a choir practisin', Frances, she'd fetch in some talk about butterflies bein' a Easter sign o' de resurrection o' de dead, an' all sech as dat. Well, I know Frances don't keer no mo' 'bout de resurrection o' de dead 'n nothin'. Frances is too tuck up wid dis life fur dat! So I watched her. An' las' night I ketched up wid 'er.

"You know dat great big silk paper butterfly dat you had on yo' planner lamp, Miss Bettie? She's got it pyerched up on a wire on top o' dat secondary hat, an' she's a-fixin' it to wear it to church to-day. But she don't know I know it. You see, she knows I kin sing all over her, an' dat's huecome she's a-pro-jectin' to ketch de eyes o' de congregation!

"But ef you'll be so kind, Miss Bettie, we'll fix 'er. You know dem yaller gauzy wines you wo'e in de tableaux? Ef you'll loan 'em to me an' help me on wid 'em terreckly when I'm dressed, I'll be able to fly butterfly, an' I bet yer when I flutters into dat choir, Freckled Frances'll see me snatchin' dat lamp shade off her hat, sho's you born! An' fur once-t I'm proud I'm black com-plected, caze black an' yaller, dey goes together fur butterflies!

"Frances 'lowed to kill me to-day, but I lay when she sets eyes on de winged butterfly she'll 'preciate de resurrection o' de dead ef she never done it befo' in her life."

An Easter Funeral.

By M. McCulloch-Williams.

fell early, woods were in tassel, orchard trees a-bloom, garden ways flecked and splotched with white and purple and scarlet and gold.

"Sis Charlotte's Vinny sho' would be proud, ef she could see all dis crowd come ter her funul," Black Mammy said, as the bearers lifted from the wagon a stained pine coffin, pitifully slim. "She hab high notions—dat gal did. Doctor he say she bound ter die Mondy night, but she up an' lib tell Sat'dy, so she kin be bu'ed dis Easter Sundy."

"De breddren an' sistern kin come foward, an' take de las' look at our sister, who is done 'ceased dis life.

They came in a stream, weeping, moaning, writhing, dropping big tears within the open coffin. The dead girl's mother, standing at the foot, kept up a low keening, wrung her hands and rocked back and forth. She seemed heedless of everything, until a white girl appeared, with her arms full of early flowers.

She was near dead Vinny's age, and under the old order would have been her young mistress; under the new they had been the friendliest playmates. She knelt beside the coffin, to lay the flowers within it, but stopped, perplexed by that which met her eye. As she hesitated Aunt Charlotte whispered loudly:

"Miss Ma'y, please marm, don't tetch dat bokay in Vinny's han'—hits de flowers whar was on de new hat, she nebber libbed ter wa'ar. You kin put dat gyarden-truck at her head, an' foots—hit gwine wither long 'fore de Judgement Day—an' de ve'y las' thing my po' gal say ter me was: 'Mammy, bury me so 't when I rises, I kin rise in style.'"

Notwithstanding Miss Mary's smothered laugh as she obeyed, her tears fell when she heard the clods rattle upon the coffin.

We caught the drone of it a mile away—a shrill high-keyed uttulation, swelling and falling, as the train of three hundred mourners wound slowly underneath richly budded boughs. Spring was toward. Though Easter

Two Children of Steam.

By Octave Thanet.

there. "I aint young," says Berlin, "but I can match the best of 'em working. And I dont' look bald with my hat on yet."

He was a tall, lean man, in black clothes almost as shabby as they were neat. He had a long, mild, sallow face, tufted with gray at the chin, and a pensive eye, which lightened when Durgan swung himself on the step.

The young fellow was good to see in his youth and strength and radiant cleanliness. "I've something particular to say," he panted; "I was 'frail I'd miss you. I want to buy a house. I've got the money"—

"You're lucky," said Berlin, "I guess I've quit the habit of making money. I used to make high's five hundred a job; now it's how little I need to lose. The machines do all the work—sash, frames, casing, facing, doors and win-dows—carpenter aint nothing to do but fit things. There's nothing in Winter. We used to make furniture, but machines do that now. The steam engine has beat the skilled workman off the earth. We aint got a living show."

"But machines help, too," Durgan said apologetically. "Now, my father was a laborer glad to get a dollar a day; I'm a steel worker making ten—and the steam engine gave me the job"—

"You talk like my daughter Milly"—

Durgan blushed happily. "I guess I'd ought to; we've talked a lot. Say, Mr. Berlin, that's what I wanted to talk about, Miss Milly—she's why I want to buy a house!"

An Easter Charm.

By Anne O'Hagan.

"Something new worn Easter day will give you luck in love the whole year through."

The choir boys were singing like larks in a passion of joy. The words that soared and swayed in the lily-scented air were of souls "that reunited, nothing henceforth could di- vide," but Nora, sitting with strained, sad eyes, heard only the idle words that her mistress had said, giving her the bit of pleated tulle and ribbon that en- circled her neck this morning.

Luck in love for a year? Ah, that was better than the pale promise of some far-off attainment of a heart's desire! To win Dan back again—back from the Quinlan girl of the black brows and the bold glances! Could the pleated trifle work that marvel—that miracle—which secret tears of agony and open smiles that wrung her heart and pleadings and prayers had failed to work?

The blood ran rosily beneath Nora's dull, freckled skin at the thought, and a shaft of sunlight, stabbing a saint in the great eastern window, played in gold about her dull hair for a second. Luck in love for a year? Then a ray, pierc- ing some blood red robe, fell upon the forehead of another girl, and Nora's eyes followed the red index. It was the Quinlan girl, and Dan knelt by her side. In Nora's bosom the fluttering heart was suddenly stilled to a lump of ice. Her fingers clutched at the collar that strangled her. But feeling it and remember- ing the work it was to do, her hand fell away. And the carolling of the boys, the whiteness of the lilies marshalled in radiant rows before the altar, the beams of brightness in the church, all became mingled in her mind in one blind pas- sionate appeal for "lucky in love."

The people were filing decorously out; the organ was playing a jubilant post- lude; the doors, held open, let in the morning freshness upon the flowering chan- cel. Nora placed herself in the slow-moving mass, where the new frill must smite the recreant Dan's eyes and stir his heart. And as her feet struck the floor without and she breathed the scentless morning air, she heard the

"D'ye mind No. 10?" the Quinlan girl.

"Sure, it's the quare lookin' " commented Dan, indifferently.

An Easter Lily.

By Charles Michelson.

His eye alighted on the old woman just as she rose. In the gutter lay a handful of Easter lilies, half faded, probably thrown aside from some church or window decoration in favor of a fresher bunch.

She picked the flowers from where they lay and resumed her seat on the steps. When the young man passed she looked up at him so wistfully that the cigar he smoked changed from the delicate satisfying thing it was to a rank reminder that its cost would buy such a creature as this her dinner.

She cast her eyes down again when she offered him the flowers and mur- mured a pitiful, foreign, broken plea that he purchase them. She knew he had no use for the flowers; that they were soiled and drooping, and that even if he had not seen her pick them from the street he could not but see through the beggar's subterfuge. He felt the pathos of the fraud and paid for the faded flowers and went on his way, satisfied with his quarter's worth of self-approval. The flowers he threw away as soon as he was around the corner.

Hours afterward he repassed the spot. She was there still, and the memory of the morning's episode had not faded from his mind. As he approached he saw her rise stiffly and pick a faded bunch of lilies from the gutter, and when he passed she looked up wistfully and then down with the same shame for the same poor wares she had shown in the morning.

"I wonder how much that graft has netted her to-day?" mused the young man.